C-MIST A Function Based Framework for Emergency Planning

As a Physical and Occupational Therapist, I have worked for many years with people to help them find solutions to their functional needs. So, I am really excited to introduce C-MIST – a tangible framework for emergency planning and management. C-MIST helps everybody speak the same language. That's crucial during an emergency.

Let me explain. This approach is based on a "Functional Needs Framework". It identifies people's actual needs during an emergency rather than labeling them as "special needs". It is also more inclusive as it identifies people with temporary needs or those who do not identify themselves as having a disability.

People have limitations in the areas of seeing, hearing, speaking, moving, breathing, understanding and learning. For the purposes of emergency preparedness and response, "needs" are organized into 5 categories: **C** Communication, **M** Medical, **I** Independence, **S** Supervision and **T** Transportation (**C-MIST**). Each category has its' own icon for easier identification and more detail is given below.

Communication:

This category includes people who have limited or no ability to speak, see, hear or understand. During an emergency, people with communication needs may not be able to hear announcements, see signs, understand messages or verbalize their concerns.

Medical:

People in this group require assistance in managing activities of daily living such as eating, dressing, grooming, transferring and going to the toilet. It includes managing chronic, terminal or contagious health conditions (such as ongoing treatment and administration of medications, IV therapy, catheters, tube feeding, dialysis, oxygen, operating life-sustaining equipment...) During an emergency, people may be separated from family and friends. Early identification of these needs and intervention can avoid deterioration of health.

Independence:

This includes people who are able to function independently if they have their assistive devices and/or equipment. Items consist of *mobility aids* (such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches); *communication aids*; *medical equipment*, (such as catheters, oxygen, syringes, medications); and

service animals. Individuals may become separated from their assistive equipment and/or animals in an emergency. Those at risk whose needs are recognized and restored early are able to maintain their independence and manage in mass shelters. Effectively meeting their functional needs prevents secondary complications.

Supervision:

People with supervision needs may include those who have psychiatric conditions (such as dementia, Alzheimer, Schizophrenia, depression or severe mental illness); addiction problems; brain injury, or become anxious due to transfer trauma. During an emergency, some people with mental illness may be able to function well while others require a more protected and supervised setting.

Transportation:

Emergency response requires mobility and this category includes people who are unable to drive because of disability, age, temporary injury, poverty, addiction, legal restriction or have no access to a vehicle. Wheelchair accessible transportation may be necessary. Pre-planning evacuation needs helps prevent chaos during an emergency and many people can function independently once evacuated to safety.

The Emergency Preparedness For People with Disabilities (EPPD) Committee advanced the Functional Needs Framework, C-MIST and developed the icons to help individuals create an emergency preparedness plan. As well, they are collaborating with local and federal emergency response organizations to ensure their programs are accessible and accommodate people's essential needs. For more information on this initiative, contact the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.

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